



City of Seattle
Office of the Mayor

Georgetown Neighborhood Visit recap
Saturday, June 4th, 2011
[Georgetown Ballroom](#)
5623 Airport Way S
206-763-4999

Moderator: Robin Tomazic, Chair of the Georgetown Community Council

Robin: Since we have a smaller group we're going to use a more informal structure and treat this as more of a conversation than a town hall; we'll go around the room and let everyone introduce themselves, and if they want to ask a question they can.

Introductions:

1. Al, concerned with sidewalks in the area.
2. Jodi, owns an 18,000 square foot rehearsal studio across from Starbucks headquarters (Seattle Rehearsal), the largest and longest-running in the NW; an events space called Soda Pop; and a recording studio. From SoDo, the "go-to" girl for problems w/SDOT and areas behind the building. Having issues with easement areas being made into public parking instead.
3. Patty, lives in Georgetown, on the community council, concerned about the Duwamish River cleanup; would like to hear the mayor's thoughts.
4. Jesse, her husband, volunteers at Gateway Park (provides access to the river) and wants to talk about investments in Superfund cleanup on the Duwamish, specifically plans to protect the investment through outfall monitoring, investment management, etc.
5. Kelly, lives on Corson, part of the community council; here to hear about general topics of interest to the neighborhood, especially re: transportation & the environment.
5. Aaron, also here to hear neighborhood concerns.
6. Matt, here to hear what people in the neighborhood have to say.
7. Kathy, lives by the community college & wonders why we're having a hard time cleaning up the drug houses, there's one on either end of her street, lives by a Section 8 house that has been a hub of activity. "Vandalism in my house has gotten me broken-hearted, the precinct tells me that services are being cut...how many more tenants do I need to lose, how many more cars have to be stolen off the street?"
8. John, owns Bannett Properties and several buildings in the area.
9. Sandy, owns a yoga studio down the street, thanks for being here.
10. Kelley, has lived in Georgetown for 20 years, came to see what kind of concerns people have; concerned about residential parking in the neighborhood, on this side of Michigan Street—not much residential parking.
11. Clint, concerned with legislation for 5 homeless camps to be opened in SoDo beginning with the Sunny Jim property; why aren't we looking at sites in Greenwood?
12. Ann Martin from south Precinct, works on community police team, available after the meeting if anyone wants to talk further.
13. Jerry, owns the Ballroom; "I live in Georgetown, but I sleep in West Seattle".

14. Jerry, secretary of the local chamber of commerce, which covers the area between here & Michigan; tomorrow is the neighborhood cleanup at All-City Coffee (10 am), CleanScapes will pick up all the garbage. The Georgetown Carnival is also next weekend, made possible by the Neighborhood Matching Fund. Interested in transportation issues, too.
15. Brian, lives at one end of Georgetown and has property at the other.
16. Maureen, resident; has lived in areas of Seattle with great streets & potholes filled, can we do the same here?
17. Betsy, lives in South Park; here to tune in.
18. Emily, works for the Seattle Times.
19. Jody, works for CleanScapes, has a facility next to Gateway Park and has been trying to work with SDOT on striping Othello (freight non-arterial) to delineate which part's public vs. private; willing to pay for it, hoping to talk to someone here.
20. Margaret Culbertson, lives in Highland Park; there are 3 blocks of trees (maples) that she's not allowed to cut down; the roots have gone into the adjacent yards and made them unusable, the sidewalks are broken up, but the City won't do anything about them and the arborist can't do anything, even though taxes have gone up.
21. Matt, [inaudible]
22. [Missed name], lives in South Park.
23. Miki, lives in South Park, would like see bus shelters around Cloverdale in S Park, also wants express buses between South Park & 1st Hill.
24. Tim, concerned about nightlife issues.
25. Julie, [inaudible]
26. [Missed name], lives up the hill on Beacon, concerned about public safety; houses have been broken into and cars vandalized.
27. Olive, has a list of things: the idea of talking to [inaudible], she owns the house that the former speaker lives in; people talked about the streets needing fixing, there are long waits for the trains at Lucille & Airport way, where the overpass comes into Georgetown; "I've lived in this area on & off for 69 years, and I've seen a lot of changes...we used to have communities where we'd meet & get to know each other, but we barely know each other in passing now"; quite a few break-ins where (on the other side of Beacon Ave); [hands her list to the mayor]
28. "I came to learn which of the three following revenue-generating ideas is of greatest interest to you and why:" 1. Trash pickup along roads leading away from shopping centers & arterials, 2. Green job development programs at community colleges & community centers to include not just home energy audits but green energy reuse, maintaining residential solar panels, windmills, etc., and 3. Mandating earthquake shutoff valves for homes that use natural gas.
29. We represent the United American Community of Washington & the Somali Youth & Family Club.

Mayor: There were several major themes, so I'll start with them and try to hit as many questions as possible.

1. Transportation

Mayor: Our budget is stressed, as you all know; the community has less \$, so the City is making less \$. Our problems aren't as bad as the State's problems generally speaking; we're a little better off in terms of revenue, but we still had to take \$67 million in cuts last year, and even that's not holding, we're still squeezing our budget a little bit more. Our principles are open & effective government, sticking to basics, and focusing on equity—there are haves & have nots and it's getting worse. It's important that we maintain the social safety net while building for the future by focusing on economic vitality & environmental sustainability. Regarding the budget, you can only squeeze so far; we've already made the easy cuts. City buildings are hotter in summer & cooler in winter, we've reduced the fleet, and we're holding the line on pay increases. My office budget is down over 30% from where it was under the last administration, travel and new hires have to be approved, and we're eliminating food from meetings, but that only gets you so far. We also raised some fees—for example, on parking meters. We got in trouble for that, but we only raised them in areas with high demand, and we actually reduced them in 11 neighborhoods based on demand. We raised fees in some other places, too, and we also had to take cuts that hit direct services. We haven't been able to hire new police officers, we've closed some Neighborhood Service Centers and reduced some community center hours, the library budget got a bit squeezed, too...the next round of cuts is going to be really difficult. We have a transportation fund that relies on gas taxes, property taxes (through the Bridging the Gap levy; without that we'd be

in big trouble), but gas taxes, property taxes, real estate excise taxes have all been declining. There was a year when the Columbia Tower changed hands twice—6% of that is a lot of money—but we haven't had that in awhile. We're past the point of easy choices. I proposed last year to raise the commercial parking tax some more to maintain pothole repair, spot improvements, our asphalt paving schedule, and so forth, but Council didn't agree with me about that. Our local maintenance budget & our bike & pedestrian improvement budget have both shrunk, and that's what we're looking at for the types of things that came up here. We get federal money for big projects, but not for maintenance; that has to come from us locally...but to get money for big projects we often have to have some money set aside ourselves, too. We've created a committee called the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee to look at ways to fund transportation improvements; they may suggest that we increase the vehicle license fee from \$20 to \$80, and we may be coming to you this fall to ask if you're willing to help finance these improvements.

Jodi: Can that be done on the basis of miles traveled?

Mayor: I'll check on that, but I don't think it can be. By the way, over the last 10 years, walking, transit use, and biking are all up, and the total number of vehicle trips taken is down by 7%. We have a state financing system that's going in the opposite direction, with lots of money going to new projects and not much to maintenance. We don't have many opportunities to raise more money ourselves.

Miki: What about taxing bicycles?

Mayor: Our local streets are paid for by general fund taxes. 80% of people in Seattle do own cars, and only 20% don't; people who own cars and houses and pay sales taxes pay for the roads. What we've seen in other jurisdictions is that the cost of administering the bike license system is more than what it brings in, but I'd be open to it if there's a good model for it—I'd be open to it just to avoid getting asked this question [laughter]. But you're paying for the roads just by living here. We have a state system that doesn't want to help finance local roads or bus services, Metro's looking at cuts...how can we fund planning & design around transit improvements, rapid streetcar or something like light rail, as well as corridor improvements that will make the buses travel faster through town, so that we can help Metro? We can try to get an answer from Metro on the question you asked [about bus shelters], but we're looking at ways to fund improvements in the right of way to help buses and bus shelters, also possibly redeploying bus shelters from downtown to other parts of the city. We might even buy more bus shelters ourselves. One of the things that concerns me about the tunnel is that if there are cost overruns, we have to pay, and we're squeezed right now; if we have to raise money for the tunnel, we don't have money for other stuff, and if we need more we'll have to come ask you for more money anyway. It's up for a vote; if the public says that's a risk we're willing to take, I'm OK with that.

Clint: There's also this specter of cost overruns—can we think about what those might look like? Adding a downtown exit, or the costs caused by continued delay?

Mayor: We commissioned a report; it has a lot to do with soil conditions and other related issues.

Speaker 1: Isn't the tunnel a state route? It's Highway 99.

Mayor: You would think that, but they passed a law saying that we'll be responsible for overruns.

Speaker 1: But it's not enforceable.

Mayor: They don't have money to pay for it—I spoke to our state legislators, and they made it clear to me that they had capped their contribution and they weren't paying more, that the interests in Seattle who supported the tunnel originally thought that Seattle should take on that responsibility for cost overruns. We're now in a situation where they haven't even authorized the \$400 million in tolling, which, by the way, would bring traffic levels down to the

level of the Fremont Bridge. They don't have their existing financing, much less the overruns now. I'm sitting down with Peter Hahn in my office trying to figure out how to do repaving projects, potholes, etc.—we have a [pothole map](#) up now, so you can see where we've been—and that money comes out of our budget.

Speaker 2: Does the tunnel have the dual purpose of also replacing the seawall?

Mayor: They're separate issues; the seawall is very important.

Speaker 2: It seems like a retrofit is important.

Mayor: The only way we're going to do this is through a ballot measure; it's been my first priority, but not the Council's. But they do understand that we need to do it too, and the only way we can do it is by asking the voters.

2. The Duwamish

Mayor: There's been a long stakeholder process that looks at the Superfund sites on the Duwamish, and the [EPA](#) will look at it and tell us what our responsibility is. The City, County, Port, and Boeing will look at it and form some kind of entity that will get money from the four of us and the other responsibility polluters to help pay as well, and it'll be an adaptive process of capping & dredging. You can only get so far, though, because there's new pollution coming in; we want better controls on the polluters. The next step will be coming around and talking about what we're doing. We've started working on early action sites to take care of them now, but we'll never get the Duwamish back to pristine condition because of downriver and other pollution.

Jesse: Seattle, Kent, and Kirkland all have the most estuaries coming in; we have a responsibility to work together on it, or it'll all end up in the slowest-moving waters eventually, which are in Seattle.

Mayor: We've had a very strong working relationship, we're asking for more help from the State on natural drainage to help with cleanup

Jesse: Policy is what's needed, a measurable and enforceable policy and a plan for the future.

Mayor: And dollars.

3. Public Safety

Mayor: Sgt. Martin, can you talk about the issues around drug houses?

Sgt. Martin: One of the problems we have with drug houses is that it's quite an obstacle to go in

Kathy: One is right next to a grade school; how hard can it be?

Sgt. Martin: We have to actually catch someone doing something in their own home; the City gave us the Crime Nuisance Property law, which allows us to focus on specific residences...a new tool, not everyone's up to speed on it, but I can partner with our community police team in the Southwest, but I can work with them on it

Mayor: Can you two get together and talk afterwards? [yes]

Speaker 1: I can't say enough about the block watch program, that's how we got ours off the street. It took awhile, but now there's a nice family living there, and the drug house has moved a few blocks away. The more you know your neighbors, the more you can do.

Mayor: The block watches are great; we're looking at how we can be more supportive of them, but it takes real partnerships to get those results.

4. Sidewalks/pedestrian issues:

AI: I've lived in my current house for 43 years, and I'm still on a gravel road with no sidewalks. The same is true for 5 blocks from Beacon & Orcas south to Graham.

Mayor: I moved into Greenwood north of 85th; when we were annexed by the City we were promised sidewalks, but they hadn't arrived yet. 27% of the city doesn't have sidewalks; I want to improve that.

AI: It's very difficult for senior citizens; I talked to Nick Licata a few years ago but he wasn't able to do anything. It also takes awhile to cut the brush, it's 5' high now.

Mayor: Seniors rely on being able to walk; it's very important.

Speaker: The buses on Beacon stop every other block; I know people with walkers have trouble getting to the bus.

Mayor: That's one of those hard decisions Metro has to make between the number of stops and where people are located.

Speaker (#28): I'd like an answer to my question about revenue generation. If we were to mandate earthquake shutoff valves for homes that use natural gas, we would fine people who didn't comply; the benefit would be that next time you have an earthquake, you wouldn't have the problem of houses next door blowing up.

Jodi: How much does it cost?

#28: I just had mine done, it cost about \$300.

Mayor: I'll take a look at it. We have a \$20 million grant from the Feds that we're using for weatherization and financing incentives to create local jobs in energy efficiency. You can create demand for a type of work, generate jobs, and make sure that they're well-paid local jobs. We want to do 2000 homes, 75 multifamily buildings, and government buildings. We've gotten all of the commercial buildings downtown to do energy audits; the goal is to create a new energy efficiency sector of the economy & then export that to other communities.

Robin: Can you talk more about homeless encampments?

Mayor: The homeless issue is serious, we know that. Our proposal occurs at several levels. We fund a lot of non-profits that provide homeless shelters, but there are a lot of people who are homeless who don't want a shelter, they want a place of their own. Cities used to have a lot of single-room occupancy hotels, but we legislated them out of existence; one thing we're looking at is how to bring those back. People are also homeless for many different reasons—some people need assistance to get into housing, some have slipped through their social safety net & don't have family to rely on, if they had enough money to pay for a place they would but they don't. There's a big gap right now between low-cost housing and shelters, and there's a spectrum of responses that we need. Because of that need for community, some people have chosen to live in tent encampments. We convened a group of stakeholders, and they told us that that was one appropriate solution; we're looking at creating an encampment as a part of the solution, not as a permanent solution. As the existing tent cities move from neighborhood to neighborhood, people see that they're very good

neighbors. That was my experience in Greenwood, and it's been the experience in Lake City, too; in Lake City now that the tent city folks have left, the neighborhood has asked us to set up the space as a permanent shelter. People can climb out of homelessness, but they have to have a support system. We're supportive of other types of encampments, including church parking lots.

Speaker: when you create a big building, you're also supposed to build low-income housing, but we've often waived that requirement. Will you enforce it on [specific project -- ?]

Mayor: We do enforce it—if you go above a base height, you have to contribute to a low-income housing fund. There's a lot of that in downtown, but smaller buildings in the neighborhoods generate less money. I believe it's appropriate for new buildings to contribute to low-income housing.

Margaret: We took a petition for the three blocks that are really bad, but the arborist wouldn't move; who should we talk to first?

Mayor: Send the petition to me.

Speaker: I'd like to see a breakdown of the cost of light rail per passenger, and the revenue and how it's paying for itself. I go across Empire [sic] a lot and I never see a lot of people using it...but I'm also not there during rush hour.

Mayor: Light rail is pretty expensive; we picked a very expensive way of doing it. We're building a new section up to Northgate that will be a tunnel, and we're going over the I-90 bridge to Bellevue. It's not paid for by revenue; you're paying through it through sales tax for the most part.

Miki: The Albion bridge is going to be replaced, and I see they're re-routing bike traffic all the way through 1st Ave to go through town, which is way out of my way, going to 1st Hill. The speed limit is 45 mph, which is really fast to be riding your bike next to. Is there a way for the speed limit to be lowered?

Mayor: So the question is whether 4th Ave can be made more bike-friendly for bike traffic diverted by the Albion bridge closure? [affirmation] We'll get an answer for that.

Speaker: I work with a group that rides the bus in the morning (lots of children) by Skyway, the speed limit in Renton is 35, it's very difficult. Can it be lowered?

Mayor: We'll find that out; it feels very unsafe to be near cars going too fast when you're on a bike. If someone's hit by a car at 40 mph, there's an 80% chance of death or a serious injury; at 30 mph it's a 50% chance, and at 20 mph it's only a 5% chance.

George (from SDOT): Part of MLK is a freeway; we can talk further.

Robin: Connect with George and he'll give you an answer.

Mayor: We face difficult economic times and declining revenues in City government, but we still spend a lot of money, and we need to figure out how to spend it well. We should take care of the basics, support economic vitality, be environmentally sustainable, and figure out how to widen the circle of prosperity. More people need to be able to share in the prosperous parts of the city. We have a new levy on the ballot, we have job training programs that we're working on...even when we make reductions, how do we help people get to and from work, strengthen local businesses and make our neighborhoods more walkable and bikable? We have hard public decisions to make, and we need your help to make that happen. I've been protecting local grant funds as much as possible that can leverage your energy, and if there are ways that we can partner with your neighborhood to make it better, we want to be able to do that. Contact us, speak to the people up here, and we'll do our best to build the types of neighborhoods and the city that you want. Thank you for coming out.